

Head Start and Community Transportation

Community Transportation Association of America

1341 G Street N.W., 10th Floor, Washington, DC 20005

web: www.ctaa.org

Contact Chris Zeilinger, (202) 661-0217, zeilinger@ctaa.org

The federal Head Start Bureau published a new rule affecting Head Start transportation in the January 18, 2001, *Federal Register*, pages 5296 - 5315. According to this rule, Head Start must provide transportation either in school buses or "allowable alternate vehicles." The rule took effect February 20, 2001, and allowed five years for agencies to reach full compliance in 2006. Most of this rule's scope is limited to the reoccurring transportation of children on regular routes to and from center-based Head Start programs. There are no new restrictions on the use of community transportation services to address transportation needs of home-based Head Start activities.

Requirement Overview

Strategies. The rule requires Head Start programs to examine their transportation needs. One approved strategy for addressing these needs is for Head Start programs to issue vouchers, transit passes, or reimbursements to Head Start families who make their own arrangements for transportation to and from Head Start programs and activities. In such situations, the provisions of this rule do not apply.

Coordination. Expectations for Head Start transportation to be coordinated with other local community transportation programs were improved in the final rule. The rule states that Head Start programs are to identify the true costs of providing transportation, make reasonable efforts to participate in coordinated transportation programs in their community, and are to make efforts to create coordinated transportation arrangements where none exist.

Vehicles. Vehicles other than school buses can be used to provide transportation of children to center-based Head Start programs, so long as they meet all Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standards (FMVSS) that address school bus crashworthiness and most standards for school bus crash avoidance. These vehicles can be either traditional "yellow school buses," which comply with all federal school bus safety standards, or they can be "allowable alternate vehicles." As defined in this rule, an "allowable alternate vehicle" is a bus that complies with all of the FMVSS applicable to school buses, with the exception of warning lights required under FMVSS No. 108 and stop arms required under FMVSS No. 131. Additionally, allowable alternate vehicles do not have to be painted National School Bus Yellow, nor are they required to follow the other elements of "Highway Safety Guideline 17" as issued by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Therefore, it should be possible for many community transportation providers to continue - or begin - providing transportation for Head Start programs, if they use "allowable alternate vehicles." This requirement applies to directly operated transportation, and to transportation provided under contract to a Head Start program.